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INTRODUCTION

By Sir Denison Ross

Over three-quarters of a century ago Marie-Félicité Brosset published a monumental work on Georgia entitled *L'Histoire de la Géorgie*. It has never been either re-edited or superseded. It is difficult to borrow and almost impossible to buy. Nearly everything of importance on Georgia that has since been written is in Russian or in Georgian, and mostly buried in learned periodicals. Except for the beautiful translations of Georgian mediæval literature made by the Wardrops, Georgian studies in general have been almost entirely neglected in Europe, although Armenian history and literature—so closely interwoven with that of Georgia—has attracted much attention, including that of a certain number of English scholars. The number of Georgian grammars and dictionaries in any European language is very small, and in English we have none at all.

The last century has produced many notable Georgian scholars, the best known of whom is Prof. Marr, and it is only natural that—Georgia being a part of the Russian Empire—native scholars should have employed Russian for their scientific writings. But what they have written in Russian has not reached a very much wider public than if it had been written in Georgian. Mr. Allen has now made accessible to the English reader the main results of the researches of these scholars, and we may at last learn all about this romantic Christian country in Asia, without the trouble of plodding through the rare and ponderous tomes of Brosset or of learning Russian.

Though still a very young man, Mr. Allen has found time in a singularly varied career—including two years in the House of Commons—to travel extensively in Georgia and to make himself master of the Russian language. The amount of reading that he has done by way of preparation for the present work is self-evident, and I imagine hardly any work or article of importance has escaped his notice. Beyond this, however, Mr. Allen has formed many close friendships among the

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121 SOME ten years ago I was invited by Lord Edward Gleichen
● 127 to contribute sections on Georgia and Caucasian Azerbaijan to an historical series which he was then engaged in editing. In the course of preparing the brief survey of the modern political history of the Caucasus which was required of me,[1] I was impressed by the lack of any accessible work on Georgian history, either in English or indeed in any West European language. Marie-Félicité Brosset laid the foundation of modern Georgian historical studies, and to him both Georgian and European students must always remain in debt. But Brosset was essentially an editor of materials, and his voluminous publications are scarcely palatable either to the lay reader or to the student of other cultures who may have only a relative interest in Georgia. Baddeley's excellent account of the Russian conquest of the Caucasus covers a particular field, and only incidentally the political history of Georgia contemporary with the conquest. The present work, therefore, has been constructed within very definite limits. It is based on a summary and analysis of the source-materials published by Brosset, supplemented by more recent studies in Georgian and Russian, which—difficult to obtain—have, some of them, become available to me only after the completion of the manuscript of this book. I have taken the period of the suppression of the Georgian Kingdom by the Russians as a suitable point at which to make an end, and Baddeley's *Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* thus becomes supplementary for the earlier part of the nineteenth century. The time has not yet come, nor are the materials available, to attempt the history of Georgia during the last three-quarters of a century.

121 Within the limits set, there are certain wide *lacunæ*. The chapters on the pre-history of Georgia are really introductory to the body of the book, rather than sufficient in themselves, for I have neither the archæological nor the philological qualifications necessary to the serious study of the earlier

[1] Published in a volume entitled *The Baltic and Caucasian States*, in Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton's series, *Nations of Today* (London, 1923).